“The Psychology of Medical Providers: Aspiration for Excellence or Self-Destruction”

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Burnout Domains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>% of Surgeons</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Depersonal</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Emotional Exhaustion</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Personal Accomplishment</td>
<td>33</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Burned Out”</td>
<td>40</td>
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Identification of Burnout

- Overwhelming physical and emotional exhaustion
- Feelings of cynicism and detachment from the job
- A sense of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment
- Over identification
- Irritability and hyper vigilance

Adapted from Kearney MK. Self-Care of Physicians Caring for Patients at the End Of Life. JAMA. 2009;301:1155-1164

Suicidal Ideation Among Surgeons

- 501 (6.4%) surgeons thoughts suicide last 12 months
- 79% surgeons with SI had symptoms depression
- 26% surgeons SI sought psychiatric help
- 60% SI reluctant to seek help for treatment of depression due repercussions medical license
- Only 22% used depression medication last 12 mo.
- 26% self-prescribed or had prescribed by colleague

2010 ACS study

- The health and well-being of practicing American surgeons has become the focus of several recent studies (2008 ACS Survey).
- The studies have addressed quality of life and practice, burnout, depression, suicidal ideation, and medical errors. However, the prevalence of substance use disorders and their relationship to these other outcome measures were not incorporated into those studies.
- In 2010, the ACS BG Committee on Physician Competency and Health in conjunction with the Mayo Clinic Survey Center performed a survey in which data was collected for substance use, misuse, abuse, and dependence.

General Population

- Prevalence of substance use disorders (SUDS) in the United States has been well documented: 9.4% of the US population > age 12 meet current criteria for substance abuse or dependence.
- Males are twice as likely as females to have met the criteria for alcohol dependence or abuse in the past year (10.5 vs. 5.1 percent).
- Consistent across demographic groups.

SUDS Data on Physicians

- Actual period prevalence and point prevalence for physicians is unknown.
- Data comes from licensing boards, mortality studies, hospital statistics, treatment programs, surveys of training programs, medical and professional societies, and treated doctors.
- Prevalence of substance use disorders among physicians in the U.S. has been estimated to be 10% to 15%.
- Because of prescribing authority and access to high potency opioids, physicians are more likely to abuse prescribed opioids and benzodiazepines than the general population.

2010 Methodology 1

- Study eligibility and administration process were identical to the previous 2008 American College of Surgeons (ACS) study.
- All surgeons who were members of the ACS, had an e-mail address on file with the College, and permitted their e-mail to be used for correspondence with the College, were eligible for participation in this study. Participation was voluntary and all responses were anonymous.
- The study was commissioned by the ACS Committee on Physician Competency and Health (PCH) with Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight with respect to protection of human subjects by the Mayo Clinic IRB.

Methodology 2

- Abbreviated Maslach Burnout Inventory
- Two Question PRIME-MD for Depression
- Personal and Professional QOL with Likert Scales
- Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test of the WHO (AUDIT-C)
AUDIT Consumption Questions (AUDIT-C)

1. How often did you have a drink containing alcohol in the past year? Never (0) Monthly or less (1) Two to four times per month (2) Two to three times per week (3) Four or more times per week (4)

2. On days in the past year when you drank alcohol how many drinks did you typically drink? 1 or 2 (0) 3 or 4 (1) 5 to 6 (2) 7 to 9 (3) 10 or more (4)

3. How often do you have 6 or more drinks on an occasion in the past year? Never (0) Less than Monthly (1) Monthly (2) Weekly (3) Daily or almost daily (4)

Alcohol Abuse or Dependence

- The minimum AUDIT C score (for non-drinkers) is 0 and the maximum possible score is 12.
- Consider a screen positive for Unhealthy Alcohol Use if AUDIT-C score is \( \geq 4 \) points for men or \( \geq 3 \) points for women.
- Consider alcohol abuse or dependence if score \( \geq 5 \) for men or \( \geq 4 \) for women.

Results

- Of 24,372 surgeons sampled, 7164 surgeons (29.4%) completed the survey.
- 1112 surgeons (45.5%) had an AUDIT-C score consistent with alcohol abuse or dependence.
- The point prevalence for alcohol abuse or dependence in male surgeons was 13.9% and for female surgeons was 25.6%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 3: Factors Independently Associated with Symptoms of Alcohol Abuse/Dependence (Score ( \geq 5 ) for men or ( \geq 4 ) for women) (see methods)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symptoms of Alcohol Abuse or Dependence (AUDIT-C)</td>
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<td></td>
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</table>

Conclusions

- Surgeons suffer from alcohol abuse or dependence at a rate higher than the general population.
- The presence of alcohol abuse/dependence among surgeons has a strong association with several personal (age, gender, relationship status, relationship satisfaction, having children) and professional characteristics (years in practice, hours worked, nights on call).
- The presence of alcohol abuse/dependence among surgeons has a strong association with burnout, depression, suicidal ideation, quality of life, and recent medical errors.
Conclusions

- Support of this study by the American College of Surgeons should serve as an example of leadership in identifying members that need help.
- These findings should decrease the shame and stigma associated with alcohol abuse or dependence and encourage surgeons to pursue treatment and rehabilitation to promote patient safety and personal well-being.

Response Since Publication

- 5700 downloads first 8 weeks
- Credibility factor already 4.5
- Gave 10 interviews (Reuters, etc.)
- “15% of U.S. surgeons report drinking problems”
- “A new survey conducted by Michael Oreskovich, MD of the University of Washington showed that more than 15 out of every 100 people getting surgery should be worried about this very thing”
- “The next mandatory operating room equipment? How about a breathlyzer?”

Sensitivity and Specificity of AUDIT-C for Identification of Patients with Risky Driving and/or DSM IV Abuse or Dependence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AUDIT-C Score</th>
<th>VA Outpatients</th>
<th>Sensitivity/Specificity</th>
<th>Family Med Outpatients</th>
<th>Sensitivity/Specificity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MEN</td>
<td>WOMEN</td>
<td>MEN</td>
<td>WOMEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;2</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>0.84/0.85</td>
<td>0.98/0.63</td>
<td>0.89/0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;3</td>
<td>0.95/0.60</td>
<td>0.66/0.94</td>
<td>0.94/0.79</td>
<td>0.73/0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;4</td>
<td>0.86/0.72</td>
<td>0.48/0.99</td>
<td>0.86/0.89</td>
<td>0.57/0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;5</td>
<td>0.68/0.90</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>0.71/0.96</td>
<td>0.36/0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;6</td>
<td>0.53/0.94</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>0.52/0.97</td>
<td>0.23/0.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Our lives as physicians are filled with blessings. We are with people in birth, death, and illness. We are honored to enter their lives in their most vulnerable moments and to share the joys of their lives with them. For most of us, this feels like a true mission, yet the busyness of our lives leads us to a state of fatigue, exhaustion, and even burnout. How can we reclaim our lives, our missions, and passions, while gaining greater self-awareness and love in our lives?”

Lee Lipsenthal MD, 2007

It is perfectionism that narrows the margin between excellence and self-destruction...

1. Time to let go of being perfect children!
**Origins of Perfectionism**

- Childhood conviction that we were not sufficiently valued or loved by our parents (Gabbard and Menninger 1998)
- If flawlessness can be achieved, the approval missed from childhood will be forthcoming and our childhood will become ok again
- The low self-esteem can then become manageable (Gabbard and Menninger 1998)

**Perfectionism**

- By definition is not adaptive
- Failure to differentiate the wish to excel from the desire to be perfect
- Is the vulnerability factor for depression, anxiety, burnout, suicide (Beevers and Miller 2004; Flett and Hewitt 2002; Hamilton and Schweitzer 2000)

**Cognitive Distortions of the Perfectionist**

- Others value us only for our perfectionism
- The better I do the better I am expected to do
- Intense pressure to continue or they will leave us
- We will be left alone

**Consequences of this Perfectionism**

- Satisfaction with achievements is short-lived
- Sense of fraudulence when recognized with an award
- Tormented that more will be demanded (more is demanded)
- Drive isn’t linked to desire for pleasure but rather to gain relief from the tormented psyche

**Why the Precursor of Burnout**

- Perfectionism is often accompanied by
  - An exaggerated sense of responsibility
  - That leads to self doubt and guilt
  - Leading to rigidity, stubbornness, and inability to delegate
  - Leading to devotion and identification with work to the exclusion of relationships and self-care

**The “Perfect” Doctor**

- Haunted by his or her failures
- Successful accomplishments do not compensate for failed attempts
- Tormented by self-recrimination
*Dr. Glen Gabbard

- Certain stressors inherent in the culture of medicine...
- ...interact with preexisting psychological characteristics...
- ...to pose certain occupational hazards to virtually all physicians


2. *Time to give ourselves permission to be sick*

Suicidal Ideation Among Surgeons

- 501 (6.4%) surgeons thoughts suicide last 12 months
- 78% surgeons with SI had symptoms depression
- 26% surgeons SI sought psychiatric help
- 60% SI reluctant to seek help for treatment of depression due repercussions medical license
- Only 2% used depression medication last 12 mo.
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Proportionate Mortality Ratio: Male Physicians vs Male Professionals

Wellness Test

1. I find meaning in my work
2. I protect time away from work with my spouse, family and friends
3. I focus on what is most important to me in life
4. I try to take a positive outlook on things
5. I take vacations
6. I participate in recreation/hobbies/exercise
7. I talk with family, significant other, or friends about how I am feeling
8. I have developed an approach/philosophy to dealing with patients' suffering and death

Wellness Test

9. I incorporate a life philosophy stressing balance in my personal and professional life
10. I look forward to retirement
11. I discuss stressful aspects of work with colleagues
12. I nurture the religious/spiritual aspects of myself
13. I am involved in non-patient care activities (e.g., research, education, administration)
14. I engage in contemplative practices or other mindfulness activities such as meditation, or narrative medicine
15. I engage in reflective writing or other journaling technique
16. I have regular meetings with a psychologist/psychiatrist to discuss stress
### The Intervention is an Educational One

1. Promote a culture of medicine that values work-life balance
2. Medical students need access to online self-assessment tools to identify level of stress and burnout (as do faculty)
3. Promote the “just culture” paradigm during training and don’t tolerate shaming and humiliation
4. All of us need to define our psycho-social-spiritual support system and access it readily and frequently

### Keys to Balance in Our Lives

1. Take care of ourselves so that we can take care of others
2. Our state of wellbeing affects our patient outcomes
3. Our personalities contribute greatly to our wellbeing
4. Our perception creates the world we live in
5. We have the power to change these things, we must want to
6. Developing gratitude, healthy boundaries and releasing a need for control are the best weapons against burnout

Adapted from Lee Lipsenthal MD 2007

### Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms— to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances

Victor Frankel

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### Thank you so very much!

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